

**Education Committee
Testimony Regarding
HB 6759 An Act Concerning Early Childhood
March 1, 2023**

Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and Distinguished member of the Education Committee:

My name is Debbi Poirier and I am the Director of TVCCA Little Learners, a state funded Child Development Center with centers located in Norwich, New London, Groton and Griswold

I want to thank you for recognizing in section 1 of this bill that compensation for early educators is the issue facing the early care and education sector. The rapid increase in entry level wages throughout the economy has left early care programs struggling to retain and attract staff. We have classrooms that cannot open and childcare slots that cannot be filled because we do not have qualified staff.

The wage compensation scale was developed with the premise that teachers who work in an early childhood setting will be paid parity with a public school teacher. What you must keep in mind is that a licensed childcare center must have 1 teacher for every 10 students. What that means is that in a typical preschool classroom of 20 children we need 2 teachers. Double the number of teachers in a public school setting, therefore doubling the cost of staff salaries. Our center is mandated to have teachers with BA or AA degrees, as we are state funded. We are also required to be open for a minimum of 10 hours per day once again making our labor costs much higher than that of a public school.

What is missing from this bill is the way in which this will be paid. I urge you to support increased funding for the state funded early care programs. If we do not receive a minimum of \$20,000 per child we will not be able to stabilize the Early Care and Education industry. There has been and will continue to be an erosion of the child care infrastructure leading to increasing Child Poverty. Without child care, many parents will have to leave their job. This impacts a family's ability to stay out of poverty, will increase the unemployment rate, will negatively impact the state economy, and will increase the state welfare rolls. There is also an education risks, Children who are not receiving quality early education are at a higher risk of needing intervention services later on (at great cost) and are at higher risk of arrest, dropping out of school, etc. All of these long term costs that are significantly higher than adjusting the reimbursement rate for childcare providers.

Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony.

Debbi Poirier, Director
TVCCA Little Learners